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Research Note

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PRODUCTION OF POLES IN MONTANA, IDAHO, AND NORTHEASTERN WASHINGTON,[1] 1957

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The production of commercial poles in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington underwent a moderate decline in 1957 from that of 1956, as shown by a recent survey.[2] A total of 518,893 poles was produced from the timberlands of the area in 1957 whereas 587,942 poles had been produced in 1956.[3]

Western redcedar supplied well over half of the 1957 production and lodgepole pine made up more than one-quarter of the total (table 1). Production from northeastern Washington was more than 35 percent of the area's output, but Montana followed closely with more than 34 percent.

1/ Includes Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties.

2/ The annual pole production survey is sponsored by the Rocky Mountain Pole and Treating Association, Spokane, Washington, which contacts all known pole companies with operations in Montana, northern Idaho (Idaho north of the Salmon River), and northeastern Washington. This comprises the territory included in annual reports for the years 1947 through 1956. Data for companies operating in southern Idaho were obtained by additional contacts to make the 1957 report complete for the whole State. Cooperation of the pole companies has been excellent and is greatly appreciated. Pole production which is not accounted for in this report is estimated to be less than 1 percent of the total.

3/ Includes 10,292 poles produced in southern Idaho in 1956.

Table 1.--Poles produced in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington, by species, 1957

Species	Montana	Idaho		Northeastern Washington	Total	Percent of total
		Northern	Southern			
			Number			
Western redcedar	6,097	128,269	0	146,398	280,764	54.11
Lodgepole pine	132,366	0	9,995	0	142,361	27.44
Western larch	30,829	15,510	0	35,870	82,209	15.84
Douglas-fir	8,687	3,843	0	1,029	13,559	2.61
Total	177,979	147,622	9,995	183,297	518,893	
Percent	34.30	28.45	1.93	35.32		100.00

Despite a decline of 12 percent from 1956 production, pole companies in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington had their third best year since 1947 (table 2).

Table 2.--Total number of poles produced in the northern Rocky Mountain area[1/] by species, 1947-1957

Year	Species					Total
	Western redcedar	Lodgepole pine	Western larch	Douglas-fir	Other[2/]	
1947	230,872	351,310	221,990	6,473	6,557	817,202
1948	212,785	138,099	90,879	5,419	804	447,986
1949	286,116	186,262	121,214	5,720	--	599,312
1950	217,049	92,338	71,651	9,070	--	390,108
1951	192,271	136,628	126,332	10,116	--	465,347
1952	217,721	104,621	152,761	19,049	--	494,152
1953	191,551	128,523	90,245	3,516	--	413,835
1954	138,624	101,842	36,938	768	--	278,172
1955	131,860	95,027	61,688	5,941	--	294,516
1956	193,393	236,655	111,268	36,334	--	577,650
1957	280,764	132,366	82,209	13,559	--	508,898
Average, 1947-1956	201,224	157,130	108,497	10,241	736	477,828
Percent, 1947-1956	42	33	23	2	(3/)	100
Percent difference, 1957 from 10-year average	+40	-16	-24	+32	0	+6
Percent change, 1957 from 1956	+45	-44	-26	-63	0	-12

1/ Montana, northern Idaho, and northeastern Washington.
2/ Mainly ponderosa pine.
3/ Less than 0.5 percent.

Western redcedar resumed its position as the leading pole species--a position it has held for 9 of the past 11 years--by displacing lodgepole pine, which led all species in 1947 and 1956 (table 2). Western redcedar was also the only species showing increased production over that of 1956; all other species suffered rather sharp declines. Comparison of highest and lowest production figures with the 1947-1956 averages shows that western redcedar pole production has been maintained at a more uniform rate than that of any other pole species.

Production of Douglas-fir poles has been particularly erratic; the lowest number on record was reached in 1954, yet only 2 years later its production was highest for the 11-year period and was nearly double that of its second highest year. Except for the record year of 1947 and the low points reached in 1954 and 1955, the production of poles of all species has been fairly steady and has averaged about 478,000 poles annually for the 1947-1956 period.

Montana's production declined rather sharply in 1957 as compared with 1956, but was only 12 percent below its average production for the 1947-1956 period (table 3). Northern Idaho's production remained at a rather constant level from 1954 through 1956, but rose about 12 percent in 1957. Production of poles from northeastern Washington reached a very low point in 1954, but in only 3 years it has climbed so rapidly that the 1957 output is the highest in the past 11 years.

Additional poles are normally imported from Canada and the west coast to yards in the Montana-Idaho-northeastern Washington area. From 1947 through 1956, imported poles averaged about one-third of all poles handled by yards in the area. However, imports from the west coast, mainly western redcedar, have been declining for several years and, for the first time in the past 11 years, no pole receipts from the west coast were reported for 1957. Canadian imports in 1957 made up 26 percent of all poles handled in the area. Although receipts from Canada were 45 percent higher than those reported for 1956, they were appreciably below the 10-year average for imported poles.

Most of the poles cut in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington are given further processing by yards and plants within the area, but normally a small portion of the poles grown and cut in the area is shipped directly to outside yards. In 1957, a total of 38,379 poles was exported to yards in Minnesota and Colorado for treatment and distribution. Practically all of the exported poles were western redcedar.

Table 3.--Pole production in Montana, Idaho, and northeastern Washington, and imported poles, by sources, 1947-1957

Year	Poles grown and cut in				Poles imported from	
	Montana	Idaho		Northeastern Washington	Canada	West Coast
		Northern	Southern			
	Number					
1947	324,734	316,764	--	175,704	311,894	44,749
1948	166,856	205,035	--	76,095	187,975	39,094
1949	221,815	300,808	--	76,689	270,995	40,296
1950	148,473	180,410	--	61,225	213,371	12,788
1951	216,188	193,341	--	55,818	110,081	22,885
1952	181,985	223,777	6,000	88,390	357,449	22,237
1953	177,130	206,915	--	29,790	1/262,017	
1954	137,531	131,110	--	9,531	220,244	8,875
1955	138,260	131,281	--	24,975	77,017	54
1956	303,635	132,359	10,292	141,656	124,916	653
1957	177,979	147,622	9,995	183,297	181,584	0
Average, 1947-1956	201,661	202,180	2/8,146	73,987	232,759	
Percent difference, 1957 from 10-year average	-12	-27	+23	+148	-22	
Percent change, 1957 from 1956	-41	+12	-3	+29	+45	-100

1/ Imports from Canada and west coast not separable for 1953.
2/ Average of years 1952 and 1956 only.

Table 4 presents detailed data on the 1957 pole production of the area in the same form as in previous reports. Demand for western redcedar poles was evidently strongest for 35-foot poles, with a rather evenly distributed demand for all other lengths; disregarding lengths, American Standards Association (A.S.A.) classes 3 through 6 were most popular. More than half of the lodgepole pine poles were 25 feet or shorter and A.S.A. classes 6 through 10 contained the bulk of the output. The majority of western larch poles were in 35- and 40-foot lengths, and classes 3 through 6 predominated. Most Douglas-fir poles were in the 35- to 45-foot lengths and in classes 2 through 5. Some shift toward longer Douglas-fir poles since 1956 is apparent, but the general distribution for all species combined is essentially unchanged.

Table 4.--Classification of 1957 pole production in Montana, Idaho, northeastern Washington by species, length, and A.S.A. classes

Pole length	A.S.A. Class 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	All
Feet	Percent of total										
					WESTERN REDCEDAR						
25	0.34	0.41	0.54	0.87	1.50	2.71	2.68	1.03	2.50	0.13	12.71
30	.22	.32	.84	1.45	3.15	4.07	3.46	.81	.29	(1/)	14.61
35	.33	.56	1.69	3.86	8.04	6.11	3.16	.40	(1/)	2/0	24.15
40	.42	.77	2.28	5.35	5.94	2.14	.01	.02	0	0	16.93
45	.56	1.01	2.63	4.18	2.79	.10	0	0	0	0	11.27
50	.73	1.38	2.70	3.16	.31	.01	0	0	0	0	8.29
55	2.35	3.40	4.05	2.18	.06	0	0	0	0	0	12.04
All	4.95	7.85	14.73	21.05	21.79	15.14	9.31	2.26	2.79	.13	100.00
					LODGEPOLE PINE						
25	.02	.10	.14	.45	1.61	4.68	11.16	1.93	18.10	13.93	52.12
30	.01	.05	.10	1.10	1.19	2.73	5.51	1.55	2.28	1.80	16.32
35	.02	1.17	.19	2.80	3.47	6.15	4.53	.69	.06	0	19.08
40	.01	1.41	.36	2.67	2.91	2.14	.01	(1/)	0	0	9.51
45	.01	.41	.33	.85	.36	.09	0	0	0	0	2.05
50	.01	.03	.17	.38	.04	0	0	0	0	0	.63
55	.01	.07	.13	.08	(1/)	0	0	0	0	0	.29
All	.09	3.24	1.42	8.33	9.58	15.79	21.21	4.17	20.44	15.73	100.00
					WESTERN LARCH						
25	.46	.02	.07	.15	.51	3.14	2.51	.40	.43	.02	7.71
30	.14	.19	.43	1.09	2.96	4.42	3.43	.11	.02	0	12.79
35	.20	.27	1.37	4.46	11.53	7.87	1.97	.01	0	0	27.68
40	.39	.83	4.04	10.97	5.72	1.12	0	0	0	0	23.07
45	.44	1.50	4.21	5.44	1.36	.24	(1/)	0	0	0	13.19
50	.23	1.11	1.86	1.39	.37	0	0	0	0	0	4.96
55	3.08	3.56	3.09	.79	.08	0	0	0	0	0	10.60
All	4.94	7.48	15.07	24.29	22.53	16.79	7.91	.52	.45	.02	100.00
					DOUGLAS-FIR						
25	.03	.04	.07	.08	.21	.35	.33	0	.05	.03	1.19
30	1.40	.32	.58	.77	.69	.33	.25	0	.01	0	4.35
35	.98	1.21	2.11	6.27	5.23	3.19	.46	0	0	0	19.45
40	1.07	2.13	6.36	17.92	10.51	1.72	.02	0	0	0	39.73
45	.42	2.87	8.28	6.79	1.63	.04	0	0	0	0	20.03
50	.18	.99	1.83	.94	.10	0	0	0	0	0	4.04
55	1.68	4.46	4.30	.70	.02	.05	0	0	0	0	11.21
All	5.76	12.02	23.53	33.47	18.39	5.68	1.06	0	.06	.03	100.00
					ALL SPECIES						
25	.26	.25	.34	.62	1.34	3.26	4.92	1.15	6.39	3.90	22.43
30	.18	.23	.57	1.28	2.52	3.66	3.93	.88	.78	.49	14.52
35	.24	.70	1.24	3.73	7.27	6.32	3.28	.40	.02	0	23.20
40	.32	.99	2.13	5.83	5.19	1.97	.01	.02	0	0	16.46
45	.39	.97	2.39	3.53	1.87	.12	(1/)	0	0	0	9.27
50	.44	.96	1.85	2.06	.24	(1/)	0	0	0	0	5.55
55	1.81	2.53	2.84	1.35	.04	(1/)	0	0	0	0	8.57
All	3.64	6.63	11.36	18.40	18.47	15.33	12.14	2.45	7.19	4.39	100.00

1/ Production less than 0.005 percent.
2/ Zero (0) indicates no production.

DPS, Ogden, Utah